



# Another explosion at Camp Minden

Today's blast is at least the seventh at Goex since it moved to the site in mid-1997

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Lt. Col. Carl Thompson, assistant camp commander at Camp Minden, points out the location of Explo Systems Inc. at the former Louisiana Army Ammunition Plant, now the Louisiana National Guard's Camp Minden, where several explosions occurred Aug. 24, 2006. (Times File Photo)

Written by Staff Reports

Though the cause has yet to be determined, the explosion at Camp Minden this morning occurred during the first step in the black powder manufacturing process at Goex, Inc.

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"It's a series of processes that the product goes through, and each phase refines or modifies it somehow until it gets at the end of the line," Goex Chief Operating Officer Tim Vaitekunas said. The explosion occurred during a "preliminary part of the process where raw materials are put together."

That part of the process occurs in a remote building and is operated by radio control. No employees were present at the time of the blast, and no injuries were reported.

Some equipment was damaged, but Vaitekunas did not have a dollar amount of how much.

The blast comes a month after a separate

### MORE ABOUT CAMP MINDEN

Camp Minden once was the site of Louisiana Army Ammunition Plant, a 15,000-acre active military

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John Montgomery, an employee of Goex Inc., waits for a ride home outside the black powder manufacturing plant at Camp Minden after an explosion on a processing line there Oct. 31, 2001. Montgomery, who had worked at Goex for three years at the time, said the explosion left him "shaking like a leaf." (Times File Photo)

explosion that shook many homes throughout North Louisiana. That incident involved a bunker that belongs to Explo, another of the many tenants at Camp Minden that produces explosives. Again, no injuries were reported.

Explo Systems Inc. — a 15-year-old, veteran-owned company — has been in business at Camp Minden for seven years, according to its website. The company dismantles and recycles old military bombs.

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Bunkers dotting Camp Minden are used to store explosives. The units are self-contained, partially underground and designed to send any blast upward and not outward to minimize damage. Still, windows in Dixie Inn and Minden were shattered by the blast that happened about 11:36 p.m. Oct. 15.

Some home video surveillance cameras as far as 25 miles away captured the sound of that explosion and a glow in the sky. Reports of the shaking came in from Lake Bistineau, Springhill, Sibley, Barksdale Air Force Base and surrounding areas. In the hours before the source is confirmed, the blast and related flashes of light spur numerous conspiracy theories involving meteorites, aliens, government cover-ups, earthquakes and even falling ash and debris as possible causes.

The nature of business at Camp Minden means explosions occur, including some that have resulted in death. Today's blast is

at least the seventh at Goex since the black powder manufacturer moved to the reservation in 1997.

**TIMELINE**

**June 2011:** About 1,000 pounds of black powder explode in the Goex corning mill plant. One worker is slightly injured when he slips and falls during the evacuation. Temporary evacuations are ordered in the immediate vicinity.

**July 15, 2006:** A fire and a "small explosion" cause no injuries at the Goex black powder facility.

**Nov. 3, 2004:** Goex explosion; no injuries.

**Oct. 31, 2001:** An explosion at Goex injures two employees and causes \$2.5 million in damage.

**Jan. 25, 2000:** A flash fire and explosion at Goex burn one employee.

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**Nov. 5, 1998:** A worker dies in an explosion at Goex.

#### **OTHER EXPLOSIONS AT CAMP MINDEN**

**Oct. 15:** The explosion of a bunker owned by Explo, a 15-year-old, veteran-owned company that dismantles and recycles old military bombs and has been in business at Camp Minden for seven years, shatters windows in Minden and Dixie Inn and can be felt throughout northwest Louisiana. No injuries are reported as a result of the late-night blast.

**Aug. 24, 2006:** Multiple explosions at Explo prompt evacuations of homes, schools and highways in of Doyline. The company loses almost 200,000 square feet of the plant that was divided into two operations. About \$3.5 million is spent relocating from E-line to F-line and constructing buildings.

**2006:** Fire destroys a building at Valentec Systems' flare assembly plant. No injuries are reported, although two firefighters battling the blaze suffer heat exhaustion.

**Aug. 16, 1968:** Six people are killed and nine others are injured when a blast felt eight miles away destroys the government-run "F" line and facilities at the Louisiana Army Ammunition Plant.

**Jan. 22, 1963:** A testing ground explosion kills one person at the government-run plant.

**July 31, 1962:** An assembly line explosion kills three people and injures six others.

**Nov. 27, 1942:** A shell explodes in the "Area F" shipping room, killing five people and injuring one other.

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